

Bicycling Smart Safety Tips

Bike = Vehicle

In North Carolina, your bicycle is a vehicle and you are its driver. You share the rights and the duties with all other drivers as you use the State's roadway network.

Follow The Road Rules

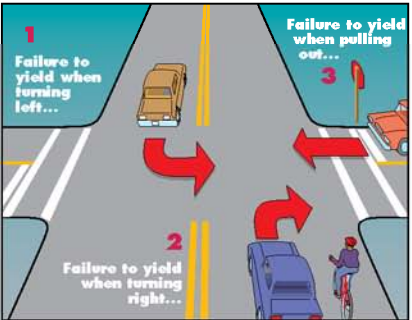
-  **1. Ride on the right side of the road, going with the flow of traffic.**
-  **2. Obey all traffic controls — like stop signs, traffic lights, and one-way signs.**
-  **3. Signal whenever you intend to turn, merge to another road position, or stop.**
-  **4. Yield the right-of-way whenever you enter the road or when you change lanes or road position.**
-  **5. Use a good set of lights and reflectors whenever you ride after dark.**
-  **6. Don't ride your bike on sidewalks and treat pedestrians with respect.**

Watch for motorist errors

Drivers often do things that endanger bicyclists, usually without intending to. Knowing what to look for can help you navigate through traffic more safely. Ride predictably and in a visible location.

Keep your eyes open for the following mistakes and be ready to take evasive action!

- 1** Watch motorists coming towards you who might turn left. Pay particular attention to their road position and, of course, any turn signals.
- 2** Keep an eye on the motorist coming up on your left who might turn right. Listen for hints that the car might be slowing down.
- 3** Watch for movement that could indicate a car is coming out of a driveway or side street.



Ride defensively



Anticipate other people's moves — and their likely mistakes. Keep your eyes moving over the traffic scene, use a mirror, and be ready to take evasive action. Establish eye contact with drivers around you to let them know you are there. Shout if necessary.

Use good equipment

You don't need an expensive bike to get around... just one that works and that can be repaired and adjusted.

Your brakes should work smoothly and should stop you well even when it's rainy. When you squeeze the lever, it shouldn't "bottom out" against the handlebars. And when you let go of the lever, the brake should come away cleanly from the wheel's rim.

Your "drive train" (cranks, pedals, shifters, chain, and gears) shouldn't creak, clunk, or hesitate. The chain shouldn't jump as it goes around. Shifting should be smooth and precise.

To ride at night, you need reliable lights and reflectors. You need a headlight that lets others see you and that lets you see hazards on the road. You need a rear reflector or tail light (both would be a good idea). The new flashing halogen tail lights are becoming quite popular. It's also a good idea to use pedal reflectors and some people like the wheel reflectors. Being visible at night is essential.

Nothing on your bike should be loose or rattle. To test if it's "road ready," pick it up a few inches off the ground and drop it to see if it makes any noise. Grease and oil in the right spots to keep your bike running smoothly and to reduce wear and tear.

In short, keep your bike in good condition!

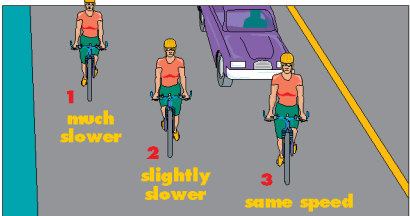
Basic traffic riding techniques

Riding confidently and skillfully in traffic takes practice and an understanding of some basic ideas. One of the most important ideas is *road position*. Just where you ride on the roadway depends on several important things: your speed, the width and condition of the road, and your destination.

Speed and road position

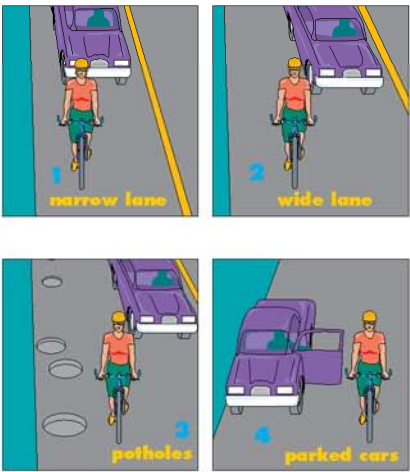
The closer you go to the speed of traffic, the closer you should ride to that traffic.

- 1** When everyone else is going a lot faster than you, keep well to the right.
- 2** When they're going a little faster, ride near traffic. This encourages right-turners to slow and wait instead of passing at the last moment and cutting you off.
- 3** When they're going the same speed as you, ride in the line of traffic. This is your most visible position and ensures you'll be where drivers look for traffic. There's no reason to ride fast near the curb and a lot of good reasons not to.



Width and road position

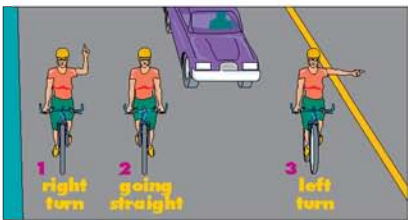
- 1** On a road with very narrow lanes, ride far enough from the edge to discourage dangerously close passing. Many expert riders ride in the car's right wheel track.
- 2** On a road with wide traffic lanes, ride just to the right of the traffic stream. This allows easy passing but reduces the danger caused by turning or crossing traffic.
- 3** On a road with gravel, debris, or potholes on the right side, ride on the smooth pavement to the left of them.
- 4** Always ride a good door's width from parked cars.



Destination and position

Near intersections, it's a good idea to let your road position tell others where you're going.

- 1** To turn right, move towards the right edge of the roadway.
- 2** To go straight, keep at least three feet from the curb and stay out of right turn lanes.
- 3** To turn left, ride about three feet right of the center line or, if there is one, use the left turn lane.



Making left turns

Making left turns is tricky but can be learned. Start on quiet streets and work up to busier ones.

- 1** As you approach an intersection where you want to turn left, look back. If someone is coming, decide whether you can move left across the lane before they arrive.
- 2** If you can cross before they arrive, signal and merge across into a left turn position near the center line or in a left turn lane.
- 3** Once you've merged to a left turn position, ride straight and watch what's going on around you.
- 4** As you approach your turn, signal and watch for a break in oncoming traffic. After obeying traffic controls and yielding to crossing and oncoming traffic, make your turn.

As you practice, you'll get better and better at merging in traffic until it becomes second nature.

Left turns on fast roads

On busy high-speed roads, it's very difficult to negotiate your way across traffic. In this case, it's a good idea to make your turn like a pedestrian and walk across when safe.

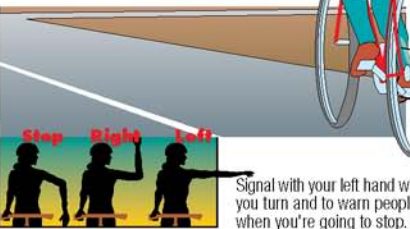
Bike handling

Having good control of your bike makes traffic riding easier and safer. Practice until you can look around, shift gears, use the brakes, avoid potholes, and stand up on the pedals without diverting your attention from traffic.

Scanning and signaling

Looking back over your shoulder tells you what's going on back there. Do it occasionally, just to avoid surprises. And do it before you make any kind of move (like merging left to turn).

Practice in an empty parking lot until you can do it without swerving. Try easing your grip on the handlebars or dropping the hand of the shoulder you're looking over.



Stopping your bike

To stop, use both brakes equally. In an emergency stop, slide back on the saddle and get low. Gradually squeeze harder on the front brake but let off a bit if the rear wheel lifts.



Too much front brake, and you tumble.



Get low and back when braking hard.



Share the Road

Cars and bicycles frequently must Share The Road. On roadways with high levels of bicycle traffic, but relatively demanding conditions for bicyclists, **Share The Road** signs have been installed. These signs are intended to increase motorists' awareness of bicyclists on a roadway without designating that roadway as a preferred route.

Bicyclists, however, must also be aware of the importance of sharing the road with motorists. If someone comes up behind you, move to the right when safe to allow them to pass. In groups, bicyclists should ride cooperatively and help motorists pass safely.



Wear a helmet!

If you don't already have one, get a bicycle helmet today! If you have one, wear it every time you ride. Today's helmets look good, are very light, and let in those cooling breezes...all while protecting your head and brain! Helmets cost as little as \$15 and could be your most important piece of equipment.

Why

In a word: protection. A good bike helmet can protect your brain. That's important if your head hits a hard surface... like a road, a curb, or a car. Brains are fragile and once damaged may not mend.



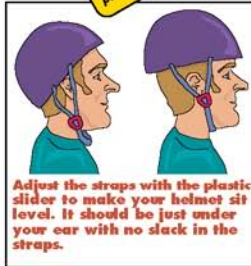
What

Get one that fits snugly but is not tight. Make sure it has CPSC stickers, which prove that it's passed the tests.



How

You should be able to see the front edge of your helmet when you look up. If your helmet tips back, it won't protect your forehead. Also, your neck strap should be snug but not too tight.



Make sure your helmet is the right size and doesn't rock from side to side. You can add interior pads to fine tune a fit.

***In NC, children under the age of 16 are required to wear an approved bicycle helmet.**

Dealing with hills

The speed you gain while going downhill can make bike handling—especially turning, and braking—more difficult and potentially more dangerous. By contrast, going uphill can challenge your climbing ability, your fitness, and your low-speed bike control.

Going downhill

Speed control is very important. But rather than riding your brakes all the way down, use them often with a light touch to keep your speed under control.



Slow down *before* you get to curves, rather than hitting the brakes while turning. Pick a smooth path that avoids gravel and other debris. And keep your eyes on the road ahead.

If you're riding with friends, give them plenty of room in case someone makes a mistake.

Going uphill

You may be able to sprint over short hills but long hills take patience. Shift into a low gear and steadily spin the pedals at a rate you can keep up the whole way.



Since you may be going slowly, keep over to the right side of the road and don't veer back and forth. If you have to walk, either get off the road completely or cross over and walk facing traffic.



Division of
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